

Zambia's South Luangwa National Park - Nkonzi Bush Camp

Naturetrek Tour Report

20 - 29 September 2018



African Lion



African Buffalo



Hippopotamus



Southern Carmine Bee-eater

Report and images courtesy of client Fraser Symonds



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Tour participants: Gavin Opie & Abram Mhande (leader/guides) with seven Naturetrek clients

Summary

Day 1

Thursday 20th September

Depart from home airports and journey towards Africa by various routes.

Day 2

Friday 21st September

After travelling independently, the seven participants from England, Scotland and Italy met at Mfuwe airport and were greeted by Gavin Opie and Abram Mhande from Nkonzi Camp. We were soon underway in an open-top Land Rover heading towards the main gate of the National Park, as the light faded. It was dark by the time we entered the park but were soon welcomed by an oncoming lone Lioness prowling along the track. The engine was cut and we watched in silence as she strolled by without the merest of glances at us. From there we continued the drive to the camp, ate and soon scattered to our tents for the night.

Day 3

Saturday 22nd September

We gathered at 5.45am for tea and toast around the fire in the dry river bed prior to setting off together for an introductory game drive. Gavin took us through the mopane woodland and scattered trees to more open dry grassland near a dry river. We delighted in first sightings of Impala, Puku, Zebra and a few Elephants. We also watched a variety of birds including Little Bee-eaters, Blacksmith Plovers, Fish Eagle and Lappet-faced Vulture. At the start of the return journey a Verreaux's Eagle-Owl carrying prey landed in a nearby tree. By 11.30am the sun was high, and animals were taking cover from the heat, and so we did likewise and returned to base.

In the afternoon we divided into two groups and headed off in search of more animals. The 'photography group' spent time with several birds of prey before moving towards the Luangwa river as the light faded. Here there were several groups of Elephants, various antelope and finally, three Lions lazily feeding on an old Buffalo carcass. A notable feature of the drive for the second vehicle was witnessing an attack on a vehicle by an angry Buffalo. No injuries were sustained but the vehicle would have seen better times.

After meeting up for drinks by the river at dusk, we returned slowly to camp, searching en route for nocturnal animal activity. Sightings included various Hyaena, a chameleon and a sleepy Leopard. Dinner was eaten in the river bed whilst a group of Elephants patrolled the shadows. By the time the Hyenas and Scops Owls became noisy, it was time to turn in.

Day 4

Sunday 23rd September

Today followed a similar pattern. Highlights from the morning outing included our first sizeable group of Buffalo, more close Elephants and Giraffes, but also Slender Mongoose, Double-banded Sandgrouse and Ground Hornbills. The afternoon trip to the river was productive, with close views of Lilac-breasted Roller and more Elephants. The night drive home produced Bushy-tailed Mongoose.

Day 5

Monday 24th September

This was planned as an all-day outing and got off to a good start as four Wild Dogs ran into the dry river bed whilst we were still eating morning toast. The luck lasted throughout the day as Abram took us north, along the Luangwa river. Highlights for the morning included two groups of Lions resting under trees, a visit to a Carmine Bee-eater colony, a Leopard in a nearby tree and numerous Elephants, especially within the spectacular African Ebony woodland. A miscellany of interesting birds also put in an appearance, including Striated Heron (also known as Green-backed Heron) and Brown-hooded Kingfisher.

A lazy and prolonged lunch under a sausage tree saw us through the hottest part of the day, but we were keen to continue exploring. We headed further north still, finding Kudu, Waterbuck, resting Hyaenas and Fish Eagles. The return journey, much of it in the dark, resulted in a close encounter with a family of grumpy Elephants which required some rapid evasive action. After 14 hot hours in the bush, dinner and a night's sleep were welcome.

Day 6

Tuesday 25th September

As before, we all went for a morning drive and then split into two groups for different activities in the afternoon. The morning visit to the river provided the chance to watch Hippos and vultures finishing the remains of a former Hippo. The main event though, was a long procession of 500 or so Buffalo winding their way to a waterhole near Mfuwe Lodge.

In the afternoon one group continued with a game drive whilst three went for a walk through the bush. This produced Swallow-tailed Bee-eater but also surprisingly good views of game. The night drive home from the walk produced a healthy pride of 17 Lions in a dry river.

Day 7

Wednesday 26th September

A walking group set off from the camp first thing and enjoyed a morning in the bush. The remaining group drove to where the Lions were the previous evening but without further luck. During the course of the day a good selection of mammals and birds put in an appearance but probably the highlights were on the night drives: with one group finding Honey Badger and the other, a superb Leopard hunting.

Day 8

Thursday 27th September

This was the second all-day outing, retracing much of the ground we covered on the first occasion. However, highlights differed, and this time included a different Carmine colony, Malachite Kingfisher, Elephants in the river, a Leopard in a tree and a brown Greater Galago (Bushbaby) on the night-time return.

Day 9

Friday 28th September

The night had been noisy with excited Elephants near the camp and a lot of Lions in good voice. Tracks showed they had passed close by the camp and so Abram made it his mission to track them down. This took no time at all and we were soon amongst Lions finishing their breakfast of young Warthog. The pride included three males and several cubs and it was great to see them active, rather than the usual sleepy version. Later in the morning we

interrupted a Leopard with a Warthog kill. It was a good day for us if not for Warthogs. After returning to camp at the end of the morning, it was time for departures and the long trip home.

This was a wildlife-rich adventure to a valuable natural reserve. There will be many memories, including a snake in the shower, Lion cubs, stropky Elephants, six Leopards and many other personal memories. Perhaps the ever present tsetse flies will last less long in the memory. Profound thanks are due to Gavin Opie, Abram and the Nkonzi team.

Day 10

Saturday 29th September

Return to home airports

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African Elephant



African Lion

Species Lists

Mammals (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common Name	Scientific Name	September						
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27
1	Four-toed Sengi	<i>Petrodromus tetradactylus</i>					✓	✓	
2	South Lesser Galago (Bushbaby)	<i>Galago moholi</i>		✓					
3	Greater Galago (Bushbaby)	<i>Otolemur crassicaudatus</i>					✓		
4	Vervet Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus aethiops</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Yellow Baboon	<i>Papio cynocephalus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Southern Scrub Hare	<i>Lepus saxatilis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Smith's Bush Squirrel	<i>Paraxerus cepapi</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Serval	<i>Felis serval</i>			✓				
9	Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>	✓		✓	✓			✓
10	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
11	Bushy-tailed Mongoose	<i>Bdeogale crassicauda</i>		✓					
12	Slender Mongoose	<i>Herpestes sanguineus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
13	African Elephant	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Banded Mongoose	<i>Mungos mungo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15	Spotted Hyaena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16	African Civet	<i>Viverra civetta</i>			✓	✓	✓		
17	C. African Large-spotted Genet	<i>Genetta maculata</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
18	African Wild Dog	<i>Lycaon pictus</i>			✓				
19	Honey Badger	<i>Mellivora capensis</i>				✓			
20	Crawshay's Zebra	<i>Equus quagga crawshayi</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Common Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus aethiopicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22	African Buffalo	<i>Syncerus caffer caffer</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
23	Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
24	Impala	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Waterbuck	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Puku	<i>Kobus vardonii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
27	Southern Reedbuck	<i>Redunca arundinum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
28	Sharpe's Grysbok	<i>Raphicerus sharpei</i>	✓	✓		✓			✓
29	Cookson's Wildebeest	<i>Connochaetus taurinus cooksoni</i>	✓				✓	✓	✓
30	Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
31	Greater Kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Thornicroft's Giraffe	<i>Giraffe camelopardalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Birds

1	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>					✓		
2	Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	
3	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	Red-necked Spurfowl	<i>Pternistes afer</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓
6	Swainson's Spurfowl	<i>Pternistes swansonii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
7	Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		
8	African Openbill	<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	✓		✓	✓			
9	Saddle-billed Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
10	Marabou Stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>		✓			✓		
11	African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
12	Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
13	African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓				

	Common Name	Scientific Name	September						
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27
14	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>			✓				
15	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>				✓			
16	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	?		✓		✓	✓	
17	Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>			✓		✓	✓	
18	Goliath Heron	<i>Ardea goliath</i>						✓	
19	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
20	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
21	African Harrier-Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>				✓	✓	✓	
22	Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
24	White-headed Vulture	<i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>	✓			✓			
25	Lappet-faced Vulture	<i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>	✓			✓		✓	
26	Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	✓						
27	Western Banded Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinerascens</i>				✓	✓		
28	Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
29	Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>				✓		✓	
30	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>				✓			
31	Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>			✓				
32	Ayre's Hawk-Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus ayresii</i>			✓				
33	Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>	✓	✓				✓	
34	Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>				✓			
35	African Hawk-Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>	✓						
36	Dark Chanting Goshawk	<i>Melierax metabates</i>	✓			✓			
37	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus parasiticus</i>							
38	African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
39	Black-bellied Bustard	<i>Eupodis melanogaster</i>			✓				
40	Grey Crowned Crane	<i>Balearica regulorum</i>			✓	✓			
41	Water Thick-Knee	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>	H	H	✓		✓	✓	
42	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>			✓			✓	
43	Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>	✓	✓		✓			
44	White-crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus albiceps</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
45	Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>	✓			✓	✓		
46	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>						✓	
47	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>			✓				
48	African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		
49	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>			✓			✓	
50	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			✓				
51	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
52	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actites hypoleucos</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	
53	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>			✓				
54	Double-banded Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles bicinctus</i>		✓				✓	
55	Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>				✓	✓		
56	Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>						✓	
58	Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
59	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>			✓			✓	
60	African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calva</i>	✓					✓	
61	Grey Go-away-bird	<i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
62	Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>		✓			✓	✓	
63	White-browed Coucal	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>	✓						
64	African Scops Owl	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>	H						

	Common Name	Scientific Name	September						
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27
65	Verreaux's Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>	✓		✓				
66	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	✓		✓				
67	Red-faced Mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>				✓			
68	Racket-tailed Roller	<i>Coracias spatulata</i>	✓				✓		
69	Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Brown-hooded Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon albiventris</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	
71	Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo cristata</i>						✓	
72	Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>		✓				✓	
73	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>			✓	✓		✓	
74	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>				✓			
75	Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
76	White-fronted Bee-eater	<i>Merops bullockoides</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Southern Carmine Bee-eater	<i>Merops nubicoides</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
78	African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa africana</i>				✓			
79	Green Wood Hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
80	Square-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus fossii</i>	H	?		✓			
81	Southern Ground Hornbill	<i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Southern Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus rufirostris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	Crowned Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros alboterminatus</i>				✓	✓		
84	African Grey Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>	✓			✓		✓	
85	Trumpeter Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes bucinator</i>			✓				
86	Black-collared Barbet	<i>Lybius torquatus</i>						H	
87	Bennett's Woodpecker	<i>Campethera bennettii</i>					✓		
88	Golden-tailed Woodpecker	<i>Campethera albingoni</i>					✓		
89	Bearded Woodpecker	<i>Thripias namaquus</i>	✓						
90	Meyer's Parrot	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓		
91	Lilian's Lovebird	<i>Agapornis lilianae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
92	White-crested Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓	
93	Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegala</i>				✓		✓	
94	Black-backed Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>			✓		✓		
95	Tropical Boubou	<i>Laniarius major</i>	✓	✓		✓		✓	
96	Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
97	Dark-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
98	Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>				✓			
99	Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>			✓	✓			
100	Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Hirundo abyssinica</i>						✓	
101	Rattling Cisticola	<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>				✓			
102	Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>					✓		
103	Arrow-marked Babbler	<i>Turdoides jardineii</i>	✓			✓		✓	✓
104	Greater Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>			✓	✓			✓
105	Meves's Starling	<i>Lamprotornis mevesii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
106	Yellow-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus africanus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	
107	Red-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
108	White-browed Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>		✓					
109	Collared Palm Thrush	<i>Cichladusa arquata</i>					✓		
110	White-browed Sparrow Weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
111	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓						
112	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>				✓		✓	
113	Red-billed Buffalo Weaver	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>						✓	✓
114	Lesser Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus intermedius</i>				✓			
115	Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common Name	Scientific Name	September						
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27
116	Orange-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia afra</i>				✓			
117	Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>				✓		✓	
118	Blue Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
119	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>						✓	
120	African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>			✓	✓			



Luangwa River